

T E N N E S S E E F O L K L O R E S O C I E T Y
B U L L E T I N

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VOLUME IX

NUMBER 3

September, 1943

"In the Sign of the Beast"

Late last spring Mrs. L. Stanbery, a resident of Maryville, asked the editor for the explanation of a curious expression she had heard about from a worker in the rationing program at Friendsville, Tennessee. It seems that many families in that region had refused to register for either ration book one (issued in May, 1942) or book two (issued a year later) because "it was in the sign of the beast."

Miss Edna Thompson, who lives in Friendsville, had heard the expression used, particularly by the members of a family named Kelso, but could offer no explanation. In response to a letter of inquiry, Mrs. Victor McReynolds, now of Alcoa, wrote

"I have lived in Friendsville many years prior to our move here last year, and I never heard of the people you asked about. I have called friends there who were better acquainted with the rural sections, and they likewise have never known of such a sect or families.

"The reference to the beast is undoubtedly scriptural. Revelation, the thirteenth chapter."

Miss Garnet Manges, a music teacher in Maryville who also has classes in several other towns, supported this scriptural theory. She had heard the expression in Tellico Plains, where many families have no ration books for the same reason. After asking about the expression, she was told, "It's all in Revelation."

The significant passages in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation would seem to be verses five and sixteen:

"And there was given unto him (the beast) a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power

was given unto him to continue forty and two months."

"And that no man might buy or sell, save that he had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

Can any one give us further information about this belief?

Old Rabbit

Sung in Nashville, Tennessee, August 1, 1943, by
Mrs. Jane Neil Jackson to her baby. She learned
it in her childhood in Nashville. Recorded by
George Pullen Jackson.

♩ = 66

The musical score is written on three staves in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The first staff begins with a 2/4 time signature, followed by a 3/2 time signature, and ends with a 7/8 time signature. The second staff begins with a 2/4 time signature. The third staff begins with a 7/8 time signature. The lyrics are written below the notes.

O there was an ol' rab-bit, had a might-y bad hab-it,
A- go - in' in the gar-den an' a - eat- in' all the cabbage,
An'- a hop, ol' rab-bit, hop! An'- a hop, ol' rabbit, hop!

Picturesque Speech

The following comments and examples were sent by Miss Irene Bewley of Greeneville after reading the "Picturesque Speech" section in the last issue. As a dramatic monologist specializing in Southern Mountain Folklore, Miss Bewley is thoroughly familiar with the speech of the hill-folk. Her comments are enlightening:

Pint blank fernent yander--- "I have heard both 'pintblank' and fernent, and, of course, 'yander', but never all in the (same) line-up--- I think for those not so familiar with hill speech that 'point' in parentheses should follow 'pint' to show that the word means just that. The word fernent should, I believe, be spelt 'ferminst'. A good old Irish word meaning 'alongside', though some say it means 'opposite'."

From Ulaidd to Chunk--- "This must have become adulterated from 'who laid the chunks'; the latter term being familiar to many hill people. That is, one lays chunks of wood for the foundation of a house. In general it means 'the beginning' rather than 'a long way'."

Whoopin' the Devil round a stump--- "I think the word 'whipping' in parentheses should follow 'whoopin'. Otherwise those not familiar with hill talk may take the word to mean making a loud noise instead of its true meaning: to take a switch or whip to the Devil."

Miss Bewley is also responsible for the further examples of hill speech which follow:

A man refusing to buy a piece of property or livestock sight unseen says, "I won't buy a pig in a poke." 'Poke' is Chaucerian for present-day 'bag.' This also may refer to taking a position about which one knows little.

In an earlier day only professional people, such as doctors, lawyers and preachers, wore "store clothes" in the hill country. A woman said to me, "He rid (rode) up to the gate dressed like a lawyer."

If a person sells all he has "sold out lock, stock, and barrel." This may also refer to leaving a situation completely--having nothing more to do with it.

GEORGE PEABODY COLLEGE FOR TEACHERS

Nashville, Tennessee

September 1, 1943

To the Members of the Tennessee Folklore Society:

At the meeting at Cookeville last fall, it was recognized that it might not be possible to hold the annual meeting this year. Even then the difficulties of getting to the place of meeting had been considerable for some of the members, and only a few out of the community were able to come at all. It was suggested that, as the time approached, the officers should consider the wisdom of trying to have a 1943 meeting in view of the transportation situation.

We have done so, and it is our general opinion that planning now for a state meeting this fall might be planning for something that would not materialize, or if so, only locally for those who would not have the problem of out-of-town travel. It seems, therefore, that the annual meeting of the Society, like those of almost all other groups in the country, must be suspended.

But this in no way means that the Society will be suspended. On the contrary, we must do all that we can individually to see that it is kept alive. After all, few of our members attend the general meetings. They are tied on to the Society by the Bulletin and by their genuine interest in the work to which the Society is devoted. Those two ties can and should be maintained.

What can we do individually to assure the perpetuity of the Society? First, we can renew our own membership. Generally this is done conveniently at the state meeting. Lacking this opportunity, we can with little trouble put a dollar bill into an envelope with our name and address and send it to Miss Dorothy Horne, Editor of the Bulletin, Maryville College, Maryville, or to Professor T. J. Farr, Treasurer, Tennessee Polytechnic Institute, Cookeville, preferably by October 1. Either one will send the necessary information on to the other. Then, let's interest others in the Society and get them to join. One new member from each of us would relieve any anxiety about how the Bulletin is to be financed. You might see if your local library subscribes.

We can also support the Society's publication by contributing to it: articles, news items about matters of folklore interest, a new riddle or ballad you have found. Miss Horne would welcome not only long articles but many short communications from the members.

It may be possible for groups of us to get together locally to keep alive our interest in the field and our contact with each other. Recently at our college, John Jacob Niles gave a program of American folk music. Practically all Nashville members of the Society were present. Possibly small meetings will be a greater source of pleasure than larger ones attended at personal inconvenience. If you do have such a meeting, be sure to write an item about it for the Bulletin.

One other matter. It was also suggested at the Cookeville meeting that, if we could not get together this fall, the present officers might hold over until such time as they could be relieved in proper parliamentary fashion. We cannot reelect ourselves; nor are we willing to unseat ourselves at the expense of leaving the Society riderless. If any member desires an office, let him say so without hesitation. All titles and emoluments will be turned over promptly. Unless relieved or challenged, however, we shall continue to try to keep the sap moving in the vine, anticipating, as you do, a florescence in the future.

Sincerely yours,

Susan B. Riley
President

Secretary's Report

The Tennessee Folklore Bulletin is sent to eighty-three regular subscribers and two exchange subscribers. In addition, ten copies of each issue are sent to prominent folklorists throughout the nation. Among the regular subscribers are thirteen college or university libraries: the Universities of Chattanooga, Denver, Chicago, South Carolina, Illinois, Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, Yale; and the Joint University Library at Nashville; Harvard, Berea and Maryville Colleges. Our subscribers also include five other libraries: the city libraries of Chattanooga, Cleveland, Nashville, New York and the Mary Mellish Archibald Memorial Library of Sackville, New Brunswick. Private subscriptions received since the list of subscribers was last published include those of Mrs. R. W. Lloyd, Maryville College; Mrs. P. P. Stubblefield, Morison; Mrs. J. E. Blankenship, Morison; and Walter T. Smith, Forest Park, Illinois.

Thanks to the generosity of our members in answering the appeal in the last issue, our files for exchange with the American Antiquarian Society are now complete. During the summer we have also arranged an exchange with the Anthropological Division of the University of California Library. These exchange publications will be listed in the Bulletin as they are received and will be available to TFS members willing to pay the postage both ways. At the request of the chief of the accessions division we have supplied the Library of Congress with Volumes 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and the three issues of Volume 9.

In addition we have sold a file of the last five volumes to the Mary Reed Library of the University of Denver.

The December issue, the last for 1943, will carry a subscription blank for your convenience in re-subscribing. Won't you please respond promptly?

D.H.

L. L. McDowell - In Memoriam

The Tennessee Folklore Society will miss sadly Mr. L. L. McDowell. He died May 19, 1943, at the age of fifty-eight. Although he was in ill health during the last two years of his life, his mind and enthusiasm were unimpaired to the very end. He and his wife, Flora Lassiter McDowell, have attended every meeting of the Tennessee Folklore Society. Every year they have made indispensable contributions. In 1937-38 Mr. McDowell served as first vice-president; in 1939-40 he was president of the Society. With Mrs. McDowell he prepared and published Songs of the Old Camp Ground in 1937, and Folk Dances of Tennessee in 1938. They also made contributions to folklore journals and led and trained groups of singers, not only for the Tennessee conventions, but also for National Folk Festivals.

Mr. McDowell was a school man. He devoted his life to education. A graduate, with high honors, of Tennessee Polytechnic Institute, he served at various times as county superintendent of education in DeKalb county and as principal of the DeKalb County High School. His long, productive career as a teacher ended with two years of service in the Dibrell High School.

For the collection and study of folklore in all its aspects, Mr. McDowell had unique qualifications. All of his life was lived in a section rich in folklore; he knew, loved, and valued the people there and every aspect of their lives. But he also brought to his study the detachment and sound judgment of the

student and scholar. Enthusiasms and loyalties were infallibly refined. But the spirit of folklore, beneath its outward forms, never escaped him. In all his work, and in the richness of his life, there was never a false note struck.

--Charles S. Pendleton

(From time to time Mr. McDowell contributed to the Bulletin. The files, which are unfortunately incomplete, show him to have been the author of "A Background of Folklore", February, 1936; and "Finding Folk Dances in Tennessee", December, 1938. His last contribution was his review of Dr. Jackson's book in the issue of February, 1943. -Ed.)

GUIDE TO LIFE AND LITERATURE OF THE SOUTHWEST. J. Frank Dobie
111 pp. The University of Texas Press, Austin. 1943.

In this pamphlet Professor Dobie makes more widely available the reading guides prepared for his course on Life and Literature of the Southwest at the University of Texas. By so doing he serves many people with an interest in the subject and produces a model of what a bibliography ought to be.

The accepted chronological method of building a bibliography (which Professor Dobie considers "often an impediment to the acquiring of useful knowledge") he rejects. Instead his reading suggestions are grouped around types and subjects. And not such vague and outworn abstractions as Puritanism, Romanticism, and Realism, but terms concrete and vital in the life of the Southwest. The mesquite and prickly pear he considers of more importance in the distinct cultural inheritance of the region than

dronings over Cotton Mather, Increase Mather, Jonathan Edwards, Anne Bradstreet, and other dreary creatures of colonial New England who are utterly foreign to the genius of the Southwest. If nothing in written form pertaining to the Southwest existed at all, it would be more profitable for an inhabitant to go out and listen to coyotes singing at night in the prickly pear than to tolerate the Increase Mather kind of thing. It is very profitable to listen to coyotes anyhow. I rebelled years ago at having the tradition, the spirit, the meaning of the soil to which I belong utterly disregarded by interpreters of literature and at the same time having the Increase Mather kind of stuff taught as if it were of importance to our part of America. Happily the disregard is disappearing, and so is Increase Mather.

Some of the subjects which Professor Dobie lists as having significance in the tradition and culture of the region are

Backwoods Life and Humor, Pioneer Doctors, Women Pioneers, Pony Express, Horses, Buffaloes, Bears, Panthers, and Apaches and Comanches. Each of these and similar sections is prefaced by remarks by the author, and many of the accompanying titles are annotated in the vigorous and original manner which characterizes all his writing. The result is that instead of its being solely a list of things to read, the bibliography is readable in itself. A reader is deeply grateful to Professor Dobie for not producing another one of those studies which, as he says, "in the manner of orthodox Ph.D. theses, merely transfer bones from one graveyard to another." If there are any bones in his work, they are the bones of buffalo, long-horn, or prospector lying bleached on the plain, and not dry but vital with meaning.

Professor Dobie has made a model for a regional bibliography, one which it could be wished might be supplemented by similar works for every region and subregion of the country until the complete history of American literature, which has never been written, might be written. Perhaps he also wishes this. For on the reverse of the title-page, where strong fences are generally erected around the contents of a book, appears this startling and magnanimous statement:

Not Copyrighted
Anybody is welcome to help himself to
any of it in any way.

--Susan B. Riley

NOTES AND COMMENTS

For the first time in its history the Tennessee Folkore Bulletin has no leading article. But since this is also the first time we have had no annual meeting, Volume IX, No. 3 will have to serve as a somewhat unsatisfactory substitute. The treasurer's report, however, will appear in the next issue, after all the bills for the year are in.

Nevertheless, from time to time we would like to devote an issue to smaller stuff; reports of curious customs, superstitions, riddles, quaint sayings, tall tales, songs, ballads, and so on. Do you have a question about a local custom, a tune, a saying? The Bulletin will do its best to answer it.

We should like to make the Bulletin an exchange of material. How about it?